Mental Ability-1929

CRIME AND DEFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

DIVERSE OPINIONS and conflicting evidence on this question, which can not yet be regarded as definitely decided, one way or the other, are presented in an article prepared for Science Service (Washington), entitled, "How Mental Defects Add to Crime." The author, beginning with the question, "For how much crime are the mentally defective or mentally diseased responsible?" answers it by saying that there is a great diversity of opinion and a great scarcity of demonstrated fact. He then quotes a very recent expression on the subject from a leading editorial in *The Mental Hygiene Bulletin*, published by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene. This runs as follows:

"It is estimated that about 2 per cent. of the general population are mentally defective. That is, about one-fiftieth are more or less lacking in brains. But this one-fiftieth produces one-fourth or one-third of the prison population; so that, as a matter of fact, many more criminals are drawn from the mentally defective classes, in proportion to their percentage of the general population, than from the rest, even tho they actually represent only a fraction of the prison group. . . . The mentally defective are potentially greater risks because of their mental handicaps than the more intellectual groups, and they need protection, training of a special sort, and supervision to steer them into blameless living."

Dr. Carl Murchison, of Clark University, after giving the Army Alpha intelligence test to a large number of prisoners in the State prisons of five States, voiced the opinion that mental defects have less to do with crime than is generally supposed. Says the writer:

"He found that the white men among the prisoners were, in fact, superior in intelligence to the drafted soldiers in the World War. And he reasons that the more intelligent among the criminals are probably those not in prison. He found, however, that the women prisoners were inferior to the men in mentality; and the Negroes were far below the whites. In this connection it is well to remember that the Negroes make up about one-third of the prisoners in all our institutions.

"The Children's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor, in a survey of the mentally defective in one county, found that large proportions of those of doubtful or deficient mentality are delinquent, and that the majority were at large in the community. They found one-fourth of those of questionable mentality were delinquent, immoral, or uncontrollable, and of these about eight-ninths were at large in the community at the time of the survey. Of the positive cases of feeble-mindedness at large in the community, 35 per cent. were reported delinquent, degenerate, or uncontrollable.

"Dr. William Healy, in a careful study of delinquent and problem children for the Judge Baker Foundation, discovered that 72.5 per cent. were of normal mentality, the others being feeble-minded, subnormal, insane, or psychopathic. In Chicago, the proportion of the abnormal was higher. There it reached 37 per cent. He also found that the abnormal were more likely to remain criminalistic despite special training and care after the delinquency. He says:

"'The causes for failure as well as for success are undoubtedly complex in every case, but it is striking to find that in 52 per cent of the failures diagnoses had earlier been made of abnormal mentality or personality.'

"From the normal group he reports 180 successes to 65 failures, while from the others there were only 60 successes to 8[illegible] failures. The group showing psychoses or psychopathic personalities contained only 11 successes to 28 failures.

"Dr. Bernard Glueck, when he was director of the Psychiatric Clinic at Sing Sing Prison, made the following analysis of the prison population there. He found that 59 per cent. showed some form of nervous or mental abnormality. Of the sexual offenders, considered as being the most serious menace to society, 70 per cent. were mentally pathological.

"The proportion who were repeaters was particularly high among the abnormal. Of the mentally defective, 80 per cent. were repeaters, of the insane 63 per cent. were old offenders, and of the psychopathic 87 per cent. had been in prison before.

"Dr. Glueck also found that the extent of psychopathologically classifiable cases is in direct ratio to the seriousness of the offense. Of the criminals guilty of acquisitive crimes, such as burglary, 57 per cent. were abnormal, those guilty of crimes of pugnacity were 59 per cent. abnormal, and of those guilty of sex offenses 70 per cent. were not normal mentally."

A gentleman who has evidently given the subject more attention than it takes "shark issue" with me as to the negro being not an "inferior" but a backward race. He says: "I need but refer you to the tests of mentality made of the drafted troops during the Great War, which reveal a marked inferiority of the negro mind as compared with all whites, much more so if compared with our old native stocks. Compared with all whites the negro rated only 83 to 106. When compared on the basis of superior elements the negro rating was negligible compared with whites. In other words, not only is the general average of negro intelligence low, but his stock of superiors is exceeding low; which accounts for the fact that the negro has never been able to build a civilization for lack of leaders in government and industry. "Well, I'm a major-general now, but it looks like I will have to do what some mighty good major-generals, J. E. Johnston, for instance, had to do endurin' of the war, retreat! The facts seem to be against me. Whether or not the negro as a race is capable of attaining the high level of the white race must be left to the verdict of experience a thousand years from now; in the meantime, we are dealing with him as a backward race, and giving him the chance to show what is in him. He is so far below us now, and will be for centuries to come, that intermarriage with negroes is suicidal for both the white and black people. It drags the white man down and does not elevate the black man; and is a tragedy for both. If we want to know what racial integrity will do for a people, look at the Jews. That stock has produced more great leaders of mankind than any other race, not excepting the Anglo-Saxon race itself, the acknowledged foremost people in civilization on the earth. The Jews have kept their racial blood pure, and it is still furnishing influential leaders in nearly all the departments of life. So racial integrity is a cardinal doctrine of my social philosophy. Let them have a mulatto north if they want it but let us keep a white south.